

May 13, 2006

Letter to the Editor
The Wall Street Journal
200 Liberty Street
New York, NY 10281

To the Editor:

In your editorial opposing fuel economy standards (Not So Grande CAFE, May 8), you asserted that the standards amount “to the government dictating the kind of cars Americans will be able drive, even if those cars aren’t safe on the road.” This is simply false.

First, the goal of fuel economy standards is to enable Americans to drive the cars they want – but that the automakers won’t now produce. And what Americans want is the full range of vehicles available now, including SUVs, but with greater gas mileage. The technology exists to create those vehicles affordably, car buyers want them, and the nation needs them, and the fact that they are not on sale is a classic market failure.

The safety charge is demonstrably untrue. The very same National Academy of Sciences study your editorial cited to complain about auto safety in the 1970s, stated that, thanks to current technology, automakers can improve fuel economy “without reducing vehicle weight or size” and “without degradation of safety.” That’s what the scientific evidence says. Even a top official of the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, the industry trade group, acknowledged at a hearing before the House Science Committee that fuel economy could be increased without reducing safety.

Congress ought to be requiring increased fuel economy right now to bolster national security, safeguard our economy and protect our environment. If the best arguments against fuel economy standards are the ones offered in your editorial, then we have nothing to worry about in pressing that case.

Sincerely,

Sherwood Boehlert
Member of Congress

Sherwood Boehlert (R-NY) is the chairman of the House Committee on Science.